



eNews from Sen. Lisa Murkowski - Vol. 3, Issue 4: : [Visit Senator Murkowski's Web Site](#)
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Murkowski Travels to Iraq

I traveled to Iraq last weekend with three of my Senate colleagues. I was able to visit with U.S. and Iraqi military and political leaders, as well as a number of troops from Alaska. Our travel took us to Baghdad and Fallujah in Anbar Province. This was my first visit to Iraq and I used the trip to get a better feeling for conditions on the ground and the effects of the initial stages of our increased troop presence.

On the day before the trip, we held a significant debate in the Senate on our policy in Iraq. In the end the Senate passed two resolutions expressing support for funding the troops in Iraq and rejected a resolution to set a timetable for withdrawal. I voted for the two resolutions that passed and against the resolution calling for a timetable to withdraw.

We all want our troops to come home as quickly and as safely as possible. I can not, however, support a timetable for withdrawing our forces in Iraq. This would embolden our enemy, give them a blueprint of our military effort and would increasingly jeopardize the safety of our troops. The mission in Iraq will not end at a specific time or date; it will only end when we see the Iraqi people take control of their own safety and destiny. We must continue to provide the full financial support that our troops need to be able to conclude their mission.

Throughout our trip, I had the opportunity to sit down with men and women from Alaska who are serving in the area; from places like Anchorage, Fairbanks, Seward, Soldotna, Eagle River, Slana and Wasilla. I could not be more proud of these Alaskans and the families who support them. Their willingness to serve our nation and the manner in which they conduct themselves makes them all heroes. It was humbling to hear them describe their day-to-day tasks. They are truly an inspiration. To an individual, they were intent on carrying out their mission. They simply asked that we in Congress allow them to do so, and provide them with the support they need – the equipment and financing to fulfill their task. That is a request I take to heart and one I will strive to uphold.



Murkowski dines with U.S. troops in Baghdad.

Murkowski Amends Budget Resolution to Include Additional Spending for Renewable Energy

The United States Senate today approved an amendment I sponsored to add \$125 million in funding for renewable energy development in FY'08. The amendment focuses on three areas of energy development with tremendous potential in Alaska: geothermal, ocean and small-scale hydroelectric.

I fear the budget shortchanges geothermal, ocean energy and small hydro electric development. With this amendment I am making a clear statement that I want to see money not just restored, but also increased for geothermal energy research and development, all forms of ocean energy, and for small hydroelectric developments. Alaska has potential to be a leader in alternative energy development. In rural parts of the state, where electricity can cost 80 cents per kilowatt hour when generated from diesel fuel, geothermal power at an operating cost of perhaps one-sixth to one-eighth of that amount is a potential godsend.

Murkowski Introduces Legislation to Ban the Export of Mercury

In an effort to protect Alaska's wild fish stocks, I introduced legislation earlier this week to ban the export of elemental mercury, a neurotoxin that can harm fetuses and young children if it continues to accumulate in the environment. The Mercury Market Minimization Act, which is cosponsored by Senator Barrack Obama (D-IL), would prohibit the export of Mercury from the United States starting in 2010 in order to reduce its frequently uncontrolled use in developing nations. The European Union has already taken similar steps to ban the export of Mercury.

Additionally, to aid businesses holding stockpiles of mercury in excess of the amount needed for proper uses, it sets up a commission to study whether the United States should establish a mercury storage reserve. Such a reserve would relieve firms of the expense and liability of storage of the metal in the future and help keep it from leaking into the nation's groundwater and air supplies.



Given our expanding knowledge about the health impacts of elemental mercury when it enters the atmosphere, this is a common-sense approach to slow

needless mercury emissions, especially in the developing world. Coming from a state that is a major seafood producer, I believe it is imperative that we safeguard the environment from the unnecessary release of mercury that can affect fish and potentially those who eat fish. We have never had a problem with mercury contamination in Alaska's seafood and this ban on exports to slow the introduction of mercury emissions from Third World nations can help maintain our excellent safety record.

Murkowski Introduces Legislation to Address Physician Shortages

I recently introduced the Physician Shortage Elimination Act. The legislation provides additional funding and flexibility for existing residency programs, grants and services that have been successful in the past but have been underutilized. The bill is cosponsored by Senators Ted Stevens, Chuck Schumer (D-NY) and Bernie Sanders (I-VT).

A dozen states have already reported significant physician shortages. There is insufficient availability of care in specialty areas like cardiology, radiology and neurology. However, the greatest shortages persistently have been in primary care. In rural areas of the country, where 50 million Americans live in areas that lack sufficient care, it represents one of the most intractable health policy problems of the past century.

Unfortunately, it is a problem that is forecast to get worse. In just 20 years, 20 percent of the Nation's population will be 65 years or older, a percentage larger than any other time in history. Just as this aging population begins to place the highest demand on our health care system, some experts predict a national shortage of 200,000 physicians which could leave 84 million patients without a doctor's care. The physician shortage facing Alaska – and the nation as a whole - is intolerable. Congress cannot idly sit by while millions of patients could potentially go without care.



Senator Murkowski receives the 2007 Distinguished Community Health Defender Award from the National Association of Community Health Centers.

Murkowski and Stevens Resolution Recognizing the UAF Rifle Team Passes the Senate

A resolution that I sponsored with Senator Ted Stevens recognizing the UAF Rifle Team as winners of the 2007 NCAA Rifle Championship unanimously passed the Senate this week.

With a total score of 4,662 points for their performance in the smallbore and air rifle competitions, the undefeated and defending champion University of Alaska Fairbanks Nanooks posted an 18-point win over the U.S. Military Academy and a 23-point win over Jacksonville State University to claim their ninth national championship title.

This was the first time the Nanooks have hosted an NCAA Championship. More than 900 spectators, a record crowd for an NCAA Rifle Championship, were present to help support the local team. I congratulate the team on their championship performance and wish them continued success in future years. Congratulations to the community of Fairbanks as well; you represented the spirit of Alaska by cheering on the home team in record numbers.

Murkowski Promotes International Polar Year in Schools

This week I convened a meeting with officials from the U.S. Department of Education, four Einstein fellows and representatives from the University of Alaska, Fairbanks. The participants discussed methods for bringing International Polar Year (IPY) activities to more classrooms nationwide.

IPY marks an exciting and unique opportunity for the United States to participate in an ambitious, multinational, scientific effort. It is rare when dozens of countries from all over the world mobilize simultaneously for the greater good. I am excited at the possibility of getting students throughout the country involved in IPY in order to help bring about a better understanding of the polar regions.

[Learn more at www.ipy.org](http://www.ipy.org).

Senator Stevens Announces Updated Website and eNewsletter

Senator Stevens has recently updated his website with a new design and many new features. The site includes the latest news, pictures, audio, and video of the Senator's work. To see the new site, sign up for the newsletter, or contact Senator Stevens visit www.stevens.senate.gov



Senator Murkowski visits students at Eagle River High School.

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